Chapter 10

# Selective Trapping Techniques

FWS employees use selective
techniques for research

Rock cubby

**Content Standard -** *Students demonstrate an understanding
of trapping principles and techniques that increase selectivity of
sets*

## Introduction

Trapping is a challenging activity. Each time you set a trap, make the set to
catch a specific furbearer. You should also take steps to prevent catching pets
or other non-target animals. This is known as selective trapping.

Information in this chapter will give you an introduction to selective trapping
techniques in preparation for further understanding the chapters on making
sets.

## *Use knowledge of furbearers and their habits to se-lect the best locations and make selective sets*

Trap location is the first consideration for selective trapping. Each species
of furbearer lives in a certain kind of habitat, eats certain kinds of food, and
follows certain habits. Use this knowledge to find the best places to set your
traps.

## *Describe the use of sticks, rocks, or other material to guide target animals to a trap or divert non-target animals away from traps*

Sticks and rocks can help you make selective sets. Examples include:

- If you make a muskrat set at the edge of a stream you can avoid ducks
  and other water birds by sticking branches out of the stream bank
  above the trap. Muskrats can pass below the branches;

- You can make a rock cubby for raccoons that will keep most dogs
  from approaching the trap;

- A few small stones can be used as foot guides at land sets to help make the animal put its foot on the trap.

### Describe the use of baits and lures that attract a target species and avoid non-target animals

The use of bait, lure, and urine is a key factor in selective trapping. Each fur-bearing animal will respond to certain food smells. Glandular lures can appeal to a specific animal's mating urges. Never use pet food for bait. Avoid other baits that might attract dogs or cats. For example, fish might attract cats if you are trapping near homes that have pets.

### Explain that properly tuned BMP traps have been tested for selectivity and efficiency

Selecting the proper trap is made easier by studying the BMPs for each species. The size of the jaw spread and strength of the spring can help catch and hold a specific furbearer. Pan tension is an important consideration as well. Try one pound of pan tension for gray fox, two pounds for red fox or bobcats, and four pounds for coyotes.

Use BMP recommended traps and tune them for the specific species of furbearer you want to catch. BMP traps have been tested extensively for selectivity and efficiency.

### Describe the importance of avoiding trails and other areas used by livestock, domestic animals, non-target wildlife, and humans

Although furbearers may use trails that are shared by people, pets, and livestock, these are not good places to set traps. Look for more remote places to make your sets. Avoid trapping a property when you know that hunters and dogs will be out for pheasant, quail, grouse, raccoon, or other species commonly hunted with dogs.

See the "Traps" chapter for information on tuning traps and setting pan tension


Ohio DOW Photo
Avoid trails used by people and domestic animals

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Make friends with other people who use the property where you trap

*Ohio DOW Photo*

Avoid trapping in any area where people regularly exercise pets

Trap placement is an important selectivity consideration

*Ohio DOW Photo*

### Explain the importance of discussions with landowners and people who regularly use private lands where you intend to trap

Responsible trappers make an effort to learn all they can about property they trap and who might be using the property for other activities. Find out who else has permission to be on the property and when they will be there. This will help you avoid problems and you may make some new friends in the process.

### Explain the importance of planning when, where, and how to trap on public land to avoid catching hunting dogs

Public areas provide millions of acres of land and water where trapping is permitted. During times of heavy public use for hunting it is a good idea to focus on water trapping to avoid catching dogs. Because most furbearers are nocturnal you can make sets in the evening and pull them or trip them the next morning. Local managers, rangers, or wildlife officers can tell you about the most heavily used hunting areas so that you can avoid them when hunters are running dogs.

### Explain how variations in trap placement at a dirt-hole set can increase selectivity

Trap placement in relation to lure, bait, or other attractors is another factor in selective trapping. At a dirt-hole set, for example, try placing the trap 7" from the hole for fox, and 12" for larger coyotes.

These are just a few examples of the ways you can make your sets selective and avoid non-target catches. Study BMP documents for the species you trap to learn more.

### Explain how trigger adjustments on body-gripping traps can increase selectivity

Trappers bend the triggers on body-gripping traps as needed to make them selective. Triggers can be shaped to allow "streamlined" otters to swim through large body-gripping traps and still catch beavers, which have bigger bodies. This method does not work all of the time. The following images show some common trigger shapes used by trappers.
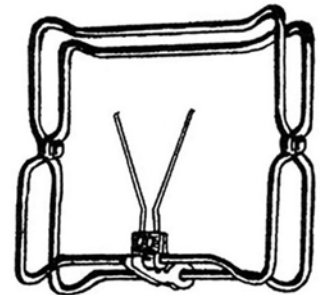
## Trigger Adjustments

Note: Trappers often set body-gripping traps with triggers on the bottom to reduce pelt damage to the upper part of the pelt
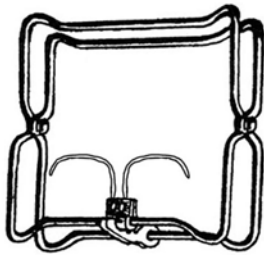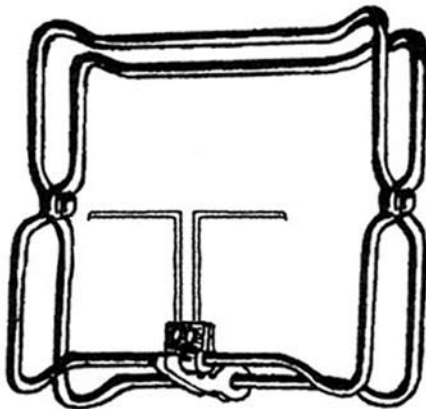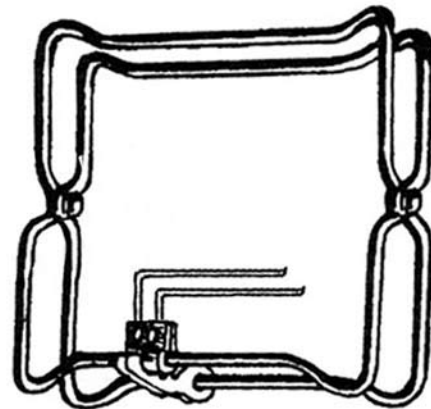
Small - for Mink
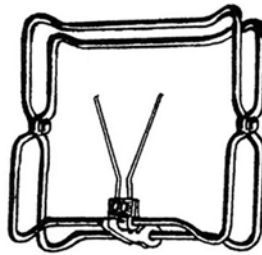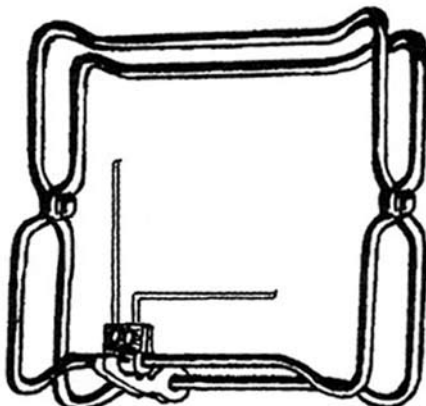
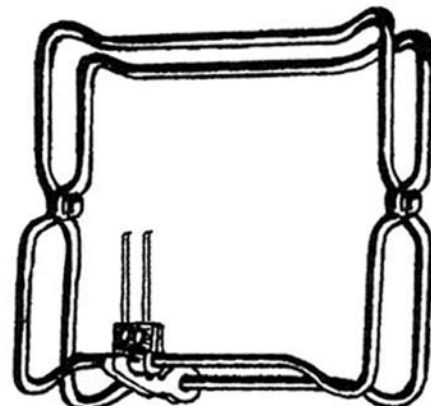Small - for Muskrats

Medium - for Raccoon and Fisher

Large - Beaver and Otter

Large - Beaver, not Otter

Large - Beaver, not Otter

Large - Beaver, Not Otter
Note: triggers are cut short